



THE NATIONAL PREACHER, And Village Pulpit.

Vol. I.—New Series.] SEPTEMBER, 1858. [No. IX.—Whole No. 730.

SERMON XXVI.

BY REV. P. M. BRETT, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, TOMPKINSVILLE STATEN ISLAND.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

"Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"—MATTHEW 16: 3.

THESE remarkable words were addressed by our Lord to the unbelieving Pharisees, who came to him desiring a sign from heaven as a proof of his Messiahship. The spirit they manifested, and the purpose they had in view, rendered their request offensive to our Lord. He detected their pride and unbelief, and saw that their purpose was simply to tempt him; and hence his reply.

Their language was peculiar—"Show us a sign from heaven," thus subtly implying that all our Lord's previous miracles had been of earthly origin. His healing the sick; his opening the eyes of the blind; his cleansing of lepers; his casting out of evil spirits; his raising the dead, were in their estimation, all earthly signs that might have been counterfeited, and consequently carried with them no convincing power.

Now, they demanded a sign from heaven, some remarkable appearance in the skies, some vision in the starry heavens, which in their unbelief they thought it impossible for Jesus to bring to pass. In reply to their unbelieving demand, Jesus rebukes their obstinacy, and charges them with blindness to the evidence he had already given them.

He reminds them how easily they recognized the natural indications of the weather. When it was evening, if the sky was red, they could readily foresee that the coming day would bring fair weather; and in the morning, if the sky was red and lowering, they could foretell the coming storm. He then inquires why they should not with equal ease foretell the indications of the moral world. "Ye hypocrites (said he) ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Can ye not see the evidences of the latter day glory in all that is transpiring around you? The reproach of our Lord to these unbelievers was well merited. For the signs of the times in the spiritual world during the life of our Lord, were as distinct and as clearly indicative of the introduction of the New Dispensation, as were the appearances in the sky indicative of the state of the weather. Nothing but hardness of heart and perversity of mind could prevent their seeing the evidences of Messiah's advent.

But, brethren, though originally addressed to the Jews, the question of our text speaks to the Church of all ages, whose duty it is to watch the signs of the times, as indications of the path of duty. Let us, then, brethren, with the Bible in one hand, and the history of passing events in the other, notice—

- I. Some of the present signs now passing before us.
- II. What these indicate; and
- III. The duties to which they summon us.

I. First, then, let us mark some of the signs of the times. Every age of the world has its peculiar developments, which characterize and distinguish it from all the rest. First came the age of innocence, when man walked with God in uninterrupted harmony—an age brief indeed, but full of glory. Then came the age of increasing depravity and subsequent destruction. Then the age of covenant grace in which the Old Testament Church was established, the age of dawning civilization and of increasing knowledge. And then the age of the Gospel dispensation. This new dispensation has itself passed through several peculiarly marked periods. First came the period of primitive and pure Christianity, when the Church gave her whole soul to her Redeemer. Then followed a period of defection—the rebound of former zeal—a period of priestly encroachment, of spiritual tyranny, of increasing ignorance, culminating in the dark ages. Then came the Reformation with its new impulse, under various phases, tending

ever to increasing light and piety. Now each of these periods have been preceded by some remarkable events, which have foretold their approach. Just as the rising storm is preceded by admonitory signs, so in the moral world, all great changes have their forerunners, which the wise and good find it well to study. These we denominate the signs of the times. It is our happiness, dear brethren, to live in an age that is replete with these moral indicators, and to some of them we now call your attention.

1st. The almost universal diffusion of knowledge is one of the signs of the times. Previous to the Christian era, the world lay shrouded in thick darkness; ignorance was the rule, and knowledge the exception. It is true, there was no small attainment in classic knowledge among the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman people, but the great masses were kept in ignorance, and in barbarism. And this was emphatically true in reference to religion. Even the wisest of their philosophers knew not God, whilst the common people were grossly ignorant. Gradually the light of Christianity has dissipated the gloom, until at the present time the diffusion of knowledge is becoming almost universal. Throughout Europe and America, and in many parts of Asia and Africa, the extent of education has increased ten thousand fold. And not only in the extent of education do we see this improvement, but still more so in the sum total of human knowledge. Truly vast are the strides that have been taken by the human family in every species of knowledge within the last five hundred years. So rapid has been this increase in the sum of knowledge, that the fathers can scarcely keep pace with their children. There is not a solitary science that has not been explored and developed as it has never been before, and the course is still upward. With justice, therefore, our present age may be characterized as one of great and ever-increasing light. It is almost high noon in the world of science, and the period is rapidly approaching, when the whole race of mankind will become enlightened, not only in physical, but in moral science. And this rapid development of knowledge is one of the most remarkable signs of the times in which we live.

2. Still another of the signs of the times, is the extent of its new discoveries and inventions. The past fifty years, beyond all others that have ever preceded it, may be characterized as the age of discovery. Scarcely a year has passed during the progress of this nineteenth century, that has not astonished the world with some new invention. First in order came the discovery of the practical use of steam; and already what revolutions has not this agent wrought alike upon the material and spiritual interests of the world! How wonderfully has it lightened the labors of the human race, and mitigated that curse—"By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread!" In how many thousand ways has it tended to the comfort of man! It is indeed his mighty ser-

vant—with sinews that never weary—preparing his food, manufacturing his clothing, bearing him with speed to distant parts of the earth, and even ministering to his mental pleasure. The steam-press with its fifty thousand impressions per hour, performs daily what, even fifty years ago, would have been regarded as a physical impossibility. By that same potent agent are our Bibles printed, and tracts sent forth on the wings of the wind; and although in danger of being perverted to Satan's uses, it is nevertheless God's own ministering servant, and chiefly destined to work for his glory. And still more efficient is it now proving as a medium of intercommunication between different parts of the earth. By means of it, time and space are almost annihilated. The swift steam-ship, and the swifter steam-car, traverse sea and land, with a speed almost incredible, opening up new sources of pleasure to the traveler, new modes of access to unsettled countries, and promoting the social feeling among the different nations of the earth. By this means, in due time, the curse of Babel will be removed, and the nations of the earth will become one homogeneous whole. By this means, old prejudices will be removed and the tribes of the earth will learn to see eye to eye, and to sympathize in common interests. By this means also, new countries are opened up, the forests cleared, new lands brought under cultivation, and by these means, the natural climate ameliorated.

The use of this agent has likewise given a wonderful impulse to other inventions: reaping, threshing, and other agricultural machines have been brought into use, besides sewing, and other labor-saving implements, all tending to lighten human toil, and to enable man to give more time to the cultivation of the mental and moral part of his nature. So numerous indeed are these, that time would fail me in their mere enumeration.

Nor must we here forget that more recently discovered agent, as yet only in the infancy of undeveloped power—Electricity and Magnetism. Within the memory even of our children the value of this agent was not understood. Slowly was this new power trained—like the wild horse of the desert—to the use of man. A few years ago, it was made to flash the messages of its masters in a moment's time from Maine to Texas. And now, within this week, we have lived to see that wondrous lightning's track laid under the waters of the Atlantic. Sublime invention! What is thy mission to our earth? What art thou destined to accomplish for mankind? As yet we comprehend not the full extent of the work assigned thee by the God of providence. But though we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

This at least we do know, that the physical tie that now binds the two great Evangelical nations, is but the emblem of their spiritual union in the Lord's work. England and America are now literally bound together—harnessed in the Lord's triumphant

chariot—their hearts and pulses beating in harmony to the music of the Gospel progress. This sublime work is sufficient in itself to be one of the signs of the times, and to mark the era in which we live.

And who shall tell what shall come next? The ever-restless invention of the present age will soon present us with some new wonder. A few years more and the aerial steam-car, guided with the facility of a trained horse, will traverse the ocean air. And vessels now impelled by steam will give place to some new agent still more potent. When the verdant forests have been sufficiently displaced, and fuel becomes scarce, the God of providence will reveal a new motive power. And the electric fluid will do the work of steam, with greater economy and power.

8. Still another sign of the times, is the increasing power, and commanding position of the Anglo-Saxon race. Mark that race holding rule over Great Britain and her numerous dependencies, and over these United States, in their virgin glory, from the Atlantic to the broad Pacific! What a race! Speaking one language, holding one faith; the first in intelligence, the first in morality, the first in war, and the first in peace! All the keys of the physical world are held by this race, Gibraltar, Malta, the Red Sea, India, Australia, Cape of Good Hope, the Islands of the Pacific, besides a commanding power in all the kingdoms of the earth! What a race is this! With the open Bible, with an unshackled printing-press, with constitutional governments, with the most inventive genius, with the largest capital, spreading far and wide in influence. Combined, the most powerful race on the surface of the globe—is it not one of the signs of the times that such a race should be in the ascendancy? And is it not likewise a peculiar fact that this Anglo-Saxon people should possess the chiefest mines of mineral wealth in the world? In whose hands are the gold mines of the earth?—California, Australia, New-Columbia? In whose hands alone are the great coal deposits of the world, but in those of England and America? This race also is the sole colonizing race of the earth. Other nations transplanted, dwindle and die. Spain and France have comparatively no foothold on this western continent, where once their power was all but universal. And is it not a fact that whatever of expansion there is now going on of political principle, is solely with this race? The free constitutions of the Anglo-Saxon race are absolutely sure to prevail over the absolutism of other races. France, Austria, Spain, Russia, with their peculiar forms of civilization, must give place in course of time to constitutional forms as now held by a Protestant people. This present preëminence, power of colonization, and expansion of territory and principle of this race, then, we can not but regard as one of the signs of the times.

It is certainly a significant fact, that God has given the balance

of wealth and political power into the hands of a race who are the only true friends of the Bible, and the sole expounders of political and religious liberty.

4. The decay and approaching dissolution of heathen governments is another remarkable sign of the times. The Isles of the Pacific and Southern Oceania, which, fifty years ago, were either unknown or only trodden by the feet of Barbarians, are now under Christian influence—many of them already evangelized and colonized by the whites. Ere the close of the present century, those beautiful islands will be brought under the Gospel, and will be governed by American and English enterprise.

And then mark the transformations that are now taking place in India and China. Both these countries are now being unsealed to Gospel influence. Proud and stubborn in their fancied preëminence, both required humbling. The work is now going on—slowly but surely—and it will only require one generation more to prepare the way of the Lord in both those vast countries, containing more than one third of the population of the earth. We can not but regard the now sure humiliation of China and India as signs of the times, which point like an index-finger to glorious results. And then mark the condition of Turkey, now in the last struggle of expiring nature. The once vast Mohammedan empire now totters to its fall. A few years more, and its last vestiges will have disappeared. Thus heathendom and the government of the false prophet are now encircled by a girdle of fire, their days are numbered.

In the religious world, the signs of the times are not less striking. The little handful of leaven infused into the mass of mankind at the Reformation, is rapidly leavening the whole lump. We have every reason to believe that a pure Christianity is gaining the ascendancy in the world. Romanism is still powerful and aggressive; but it can not endure the light. The gigantic arms of the steam-press, with its millions of sheets daily; the electric telegraph, which will soon encircle the earth, the steamship and railway uniting the nations, and withal an open Bible dispensed as freely as the air, unitedly will soon change the character of Romanism. I say change its character, for in this way alone, under Gospel influences, will it probably be got rid of. How different the Roman Church in England and America from that of Mexico and South-America! And what has made that difference? The light and example of Protestant Christianity. It is to effect this end that God is now drawing the nations of the earth nearer to each other, that each may derive from the other whatever is good in their characters.

We live also in an age of Revivals—the power of religion has been felt during the past year, as never before in the world's history. The Spirit of God has been poured out in pentecostal power, and

the work is only just begun, From various indications we firmly believe, that this autumn and winter will witness a glorious work of grace, more extensive and powerful than that of the past spring. Never were the hearts of God's people more interested for the salvation of their fellow-men. Never was there a more cheerful benevolence and self-denial. Never was there a stronger determination to labor for the spread of Messiah's kingdom.

Such, brethren, are the chief of the signs of the times which mark the present age. This leads us to inquire,

II. What do these signs indicate?

That they have a meaning, we can not doubt, any more than we can the indications of external nature. We can discern the face of the sky; why, then, should we not be able to discern the signs of the times?

1. First, then, these signs clearly indicate the rapid progress of Messiah's kingdom, towards an universal and firm establishment in the hearts of all mankind. The prophet Daniel, in his vision, saw, "And, behold, One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom—that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." And do not all the signs of the times indicate the rapid fulfillment of this prophecy? Eighteen hundred years ago the whole world was shrouded in the dense darkness of barbarism. Asia, Africa, Europe, America, were peopled by the heathen. The Star of the East rested only over the Holy Land. Behold, now, what God hath wrought! All Europe is, nominally, Christian; the then undiscovered continent of America is giving forth a most powerful Christian influence; Asia is girdled by Christian powers; Africa, at its extreme south and extreme north, has its Christian outposts. The once savage isles of the ocean have been brought to the knowledge of Jesus, and the concentrated power of Protestantism is now in a position to make greater inroads upon the kingdoms of this world than ever before. God is fulfilling his promise: "I will overturn, overturn, and overturn, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him." Every convulsion in the political world at the present day brings nearer the kingdom of Christ; and still more, every discovery and every invention has the same tendency. These inventions are altogether in the hands of pure Christianity, and are so many instruments of power. Think, for a moment, what an immense preponderance has been given to Christian power by the discovery of steam. It has made Christians the food-providers, the carriers, the clothiers, and the governors of the world. Christians now govern the world, in the most exigent sense of the word. The navy, army, political power, literature, and muni-

tions of war, are all in the hands of Christian nations; and, in a comparatively short space of time, every political combination must bow before the Cross.

And now this new element of power has been inaugurated—the magnetic telegraph. Its influence in hastening on the millennial day can not be doubted. Designed solely for commercial purposes, it can not fail to aid in the extension of Messiah's kingdom.

First. It will act as a peace-maker, binding in perpetual amity the two great Protestant nations of the world. Its iron tie will, we trust, prove emblematic of the bonds that unite the Anglo-Saxon race in holy Christian alliance; bringing the two governments into direct communication, war would almost seem impossible. Then,

Secondly. It must necessarily exert a moral influence on the world, and give an increased preponderance to those Christian powers who possess it. It will be a new evidence to heathenism of the immense superiority of Christianity, proving conclusively that inventive genius and intellectual power are the natural results of Christian faith. When the heathen mind begins to comprehend these facts, and to compare the results achieved by the two systems, it can not but award the palm to the religion of the Cross, and thus be prepared to receive it with alacrity. All these signs of the times, then, brethren, indicate that the night of the world's thralldom is far spent, and that the day of its complete emancipation and restoration is at hand. It is a fact, that a slight investigation proves beyond peradventure, that mankind are progressing towards perfection. Men are wiser, better, and happier than they were eighteen hundred years ago. Even in the days of Solomon, there was a tendency to decry the then present generation as peculiarly corrupt, and as deteriorated from the past. But the wise man says, Eccles. 7: 10: "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this." The condition of our humanity is on an ascending scale. The standard of morality is raised; human life is lengthened; men have a thousand-fold more sources of enjoyment; are better, and more universally, educated; and are, in every way, better off. And this tendency upwards will, ere long, enable our race to reach perfection. All these facts indicate the approach of the millennium. He who runs may read, that "the day of Christ is at hand!"

"Messiah comes! Let furious discord cease;
Be peace on earth before the Prince of Peace!
Disease and anguish feel his blest control,
And howling fiends release the tortured soul!
The beams of gladness hell's dark caves illumine,
And Mercy brood above the distant gloom."

Yes, beloved, the signs of the times all evidence the bringing in of a better day, when mankind shall all be brought under the

reign of King Jesus; "when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess," and when the Christian faith shall exert its appropriate influence upon the whole race of Adam.

III. In conclusion: What is our duty, in view of these signs of the times?

Our first duty is, rightly to discern them. Not to do so, is alike sinful and foolish. The proud Sadducees and Pharisees failed to discern the signs of Messiah's advent, simply because the love of sin blinded them. The consequence was, that they failed to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Brethren, "beware, lest a promise being left you of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Oh! then, we beseech you, "discern the signs of the times." Study their spiritual meaning, and see in them so many indications of the existence of Messiah's kingdom on earth. Learn from them the fact, that Jesus was appointed by the Father to be the Redeemer and Governor of the world; that his kingdom is now triumphing over the kingdom of darkness, and will eventually destroy it, and rule alone.

Thus rightly discerning the signs of the times, it is your duty to seek an entrance into the kingdom of Christ without delay. Every unconverted man stands on the side of Satan's kingdom, and is doing all he can to sustain and continue Satan's empire over the earth. Let all such see that they are sustaining that which tends to make men miserable on earth, and to perpetuate their misery in hell. We charge such to come out from Satan's kingdom without delay. In the name of Messiah, the Prince of Peace, we invite you to join that kingdom whose motto is: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will to men." The duty of those who are already members of Christ's kingdom, is to labor and pray for its incoming in greater power and glory. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," should be the living, active prayer of every follower of Jesus. As we have seen a whole nation exulting in the success of the sub-marine telegraph—rejoicing in it, as a triumph of mind over matter—so let Christian Israel rejoice in every thing that tends to expedite the Master's kingdom. Brethren, it is our privilege and our duty, in every possible way—by our example, precept, talents, and wealth—to speed on the day of the Lord. Have we made the lightning our servant? Then look to it, that the servant is not greater than the master. Help, then, with all your might, to carry on the work of the now-conquering Saviour. Give cheerfully your time, your wealth, all that you have and are, to this glorious work; and let our earnest prayer be, that the signs of the times may yet thicken upon us, indicating, with ever increasing power, that the day of the Lord is at hand. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

BY THE REV. NATHANIEL HEWIT, D.D.,

PASTOR FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

CHRIST FREELY OFFERED TO SINNERS INDISCRIMINATELY.

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."—JOHN 4: 10.

IN dwelling upon this memorable and compassionate language of Christ, let us—

I. Advert to the person to whom these words were spoken. She was a Samaritan. The Jews regarded the Samaritans very much as Christians in our day regard the Mohammedans. Besides being a Samaritan, she was also profligate. The manner in which our Lord declared that she had had five husbands, intimates that they were all still living; and the probability is, that through her ill-temper, or other offensive qualities, they had each of them put her away, and her reputation had become so bad, that no one would marry her, and consequently she was reduced to the lowest state of degradation and want, and now lived with some one as base as herself. We have in this woman what we mean, when we say of some persons, that they are worthless; and as to the probability of a reformation, hopeless. Her deportment at the first, also shows what we often find in such persons. She was bold and hardened. Her language and manner during the early part of her interview with Jesus, was, as we say, pert. She was conceited and impudent; and bad as she was, she had her religion, and was ready to defend it. In her were united the deepest moral depravity with the blindness of false religion—shameless effrontery with thoughtless levity—so that she readily sustained herself, repelling the first advances of Christ towards her conversion. *She is a lost soul!* There she stands, a specimen of human nature sunk to the depths of corruption, and fast bound in the prison of guilt and darkness, and, like a maniac, light-hearted and merry in her chains.

It was to this wretched creature, odious and worthless, that the Son of God, who came into our world from the highest heavens to seek and to save that which was lost, said: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have

given thee living water." Weary, hungry, thirsty, at the heat of the day, having asked of this woman a drink of water, she morosely fell upon him, impelled by the animosity subsisting between the Jews and Samaritans, with the taunting question, How, being a Jew, comest thou to ask water of me, a Samaritan? How are the feelings of humanity here suffocated and outraged, by the bitterness of party zeal in support of false religion! How meekly does Christ bear the "contradiction" of this sinner against himself! Gently—sweetly—lifting himself above the wreck and ruin before him, and contemplating in her only the original nature which God had given her as an intelligent and immortal being, capable of becoming a child of God, and of being beautified and ennobled and blessed by means of his redeeming power and love, he opened for her at once the door of mercy, and welcomed her to enter. Under the circumstances of the case, this reply of Christ is every way most wonderful. And we proceed—

II. To advert to the attitude of Christ, and the manner of his proceedings with this lost soul. No description can reach the sublimity and grace of the attitude of Christ on this occasion. It is a scene for deep meditation, not for the tongue or pen. You must take time, and ponder on that meeting together, at Jacob's well, of God and the creature—the Saviour and the lost; on the one hand, guilt and despair; on the other, mercy and power to save! But I forbear, and select for consideration,

First, The absence in Christ of any manifestation of anger or contempt. His posture is an exposition and an example of the declaration of the Apostle, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.*" Jesus does not impute the sins of this woman to her. He overlooks them. Had he imputed her sins to her, and treated her according to justice, according to law, he would have either taken no notice of her at all, and left her in her ignorance and corruption to fill up the measure of her iniquities, or he would have destroyed her on the spot. Instead of this, "Wrath stands silent by, and Mercy fills the throne." We have also a demonstration of the truth of the Old Testament declaration of God's mercy for sinners, *that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but he would rather that he should turn and live.* He had provocation enough to turn from her, and leave her. How patiently, in like manner, has God in Christ endured the contradiction of sinners against himself! Under the dispensation of the Gospel, what multitudes, being called to take the promise of life, betray the same supercilious ignorance and contempt of it, and of its Author, yet still the offense is overlooked, and the call and the promise repeated. In that gospel, God in Christ comes nigh to the children of men, dead in trespasses and in sins, and draws nigh, not to condemn and to destroy, but to pardon and to save. See how the bare fact of Christ's being sent

to save, is a practical demonstration of the love of God to us guilty and worthless sinners! Ought not this fact to obviate the violent prejudice of man's heart against God, that he rather desires the destruction of sinners than their salvation? The attitude of Christ in respect to this Samaritan outcast is an experimental elucidation of the nature of God's saving grace to lost man; and the manifestation of his favor towards her, is not a singular mark of infinite compassion on her alone, but a specimen and pledge of that mercy through which he reaches and delivers all who are saved out of the ruined race of Adam. Preach the Gospel to *every creature*, was the gracious commission given by Christ to his apostles. When, now, the Gospel is sounding in your ears, call to mind the attitude of Christ before this guilty and wretched Samaritan, and understand and believe that by his Gospel Jesus comes to you as to her, not imputing your sins to you; but overlooking all that you have done, and all that you are, he holds out his helping hand to deliver you from guilt, misery and perdition, and to make you a child of God, and a blessed heir of life and glory. I observe,

Secondly, that our Lord does not only pass by the guilt of this sinner, but proceeds to reveal to her the exceeding riches of his grace and power, for her free acceptance. He informs her of the gift of God: "*If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee,*" etc. By the gift of God, he means Himself: as if he had said, If thou knewest the gift of God, even him that saith to thee, *Give me to drink*, etc. Christ himself is that gift of God! and in him are given all things necessary to our everlasting salvation. He has the living water to give, and is himself that living water. Take notice of the form of the words here: *If thou knewest, thou wouldest have asked*. This woman was ignorant of Christ, and therefore desired him not. Why is it, that wherever the Gospel is preached, all persons do not immediately receive Christ, and in Him everlasting life? It is because they know him not. Had this woman known Him, she would have asked for the water of life. The same ignorance prevents all who now hear me from calling on the name of the Lord. If any one, however, is in earnest about his salvation, and is seeking what he shall do, and is ready to fall into despair, let him know that he has not yet "*known the gift of God*;" for, "If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have asked. Christ, as our Saviour, is *so* given, that when a guilty, miserable sinner knows *how* he is given, he immediately makes a believing application to him, with the animating and joyful assurance that he may rely upon his grace and power, and that he is an all-sufficient Saviour. Christ connects the certainty of his giving the living water with the asking, and the certainty of that asking follows the knowledge of the gift. Behold the freeness of saving grace! Living water had for the asking! Be-

hold the freeness of saving grace to the most worthless and hopeless of the children of sin and misery—this Samaritan—this profligate! The same grace—the same living water—the same gift of God—the same Jesus, Saviour—by his word is now nigh to you, whosoever you may be, and that notwithstanding the wickedness of which you may have been guilty. If now—even at this present moment—you knew the gift of God, you would ask of him, and he would give you the water of life!

III. I proceed, and observe, thirdly, that under the figure of living water, the saving grace of God for lost man is intended. It is called *living water*, to indicate both its source and its effect. It gives life, as water gives life to vegetation, and is an essential element to maintain the life of man, as it springs from God, who is a perpetual and inexhaustible spring and fountain of living waters. Both the cleansing and life-giving quality of water is here included. The grace of God in Christ—"The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world"—cleanses the soul of man of its guilt and pollution. Not only so, but following the reconciliation to God is the restoration of the lost image of God—the holiness and happiness of the "divine nature." We by nature are like arid and barren wastes, desolate and dreary. The soul of man by nature is, as to true wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and happiness, a waste and howling desert. God's grace, like dew and rain, and springs and water-courses, makes it a garden, a paradise; the grace of God, who is like medicinal springs, to change, and heal, and beautify. All this saving power and grace is treasured up in Christ, who is an opened fountain of living waters. Hence, he says in another place: Is any man athirst, let him come unto me and drink; and again, Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely. For a time, many of the children of men seem to be green and flourishing, though ignorant of Christ and the living water streaming from his fullness and grace. But they soon wither and droop, and fade and die. Many of you are now fresh and blooming, luxuriant and full of promise. But your root goes not down to the depths of living and inexhaustible springs. You have but a thin surface of soil, and the waters which nourish you are but the land-floods of spring, the transient vigor of youth and early maturity. So you are, as to your happiness; but even now, as to wisdom and goodness, as to righteousness and peace with God, as to all those qualities and powers essential to your holiness and eternal life beyond the grave, you are all, if out of Christ, barren and fruitless—nay more, you are fruitful in sin, being wormwood and gall. A little time will make all this most evident to you: and did you but know it, you would now ask of Christ, and he would give you living water. Further on in this narrative before us, Jesus, comparing himself still to living water, (in reply to the woman's demand for that living water, that

she might come no more to the well,) remarked, that whosoever drank of the well would thirst again; but the living water, which he gave, was of a different nature, and whosoever drank of it would thirst no more, because it would be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life. By this he means that all creatures—that every thing here—that all things, indeed, except the grace of God—are insufficient to fill and satisfy the soul of man. All the pleasant things on earth, even when we can have them and enjoy them, yield but a momentary pleasure. You who look forward with hope and earnest desire to some future good in the world, should you be gratified, will soon be weary of it. All the expedients to quell an accusing conscience and expel the fear of a judgment to come, which you may now be using, will fail, and *you will thirst again*. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and going to him will put an end to your guilt and fear. Take notice here of the fact, that if you receive Christ, you will never lose him. Drink of him, and the grace you receive will abide with you forever. The water he gives, as he himself affirms, will be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life. The twelfth chapter of Isaiah opens up the blessed state of every one who, overwhelmed with guilt and fear, has found Christ his Saviour; and it will be your song, if you so know the gift of God, as to ask of Jesus, and receive of him living water. “And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold! God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

In conclusion, I remark, that if not one person of us all is in fact as vile and abject as was this Samaritan, nevertheless, we all are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins, and are without God and without hope, and equally as she, need the great grace of our divine Redeemer. Like her, too, if we receive that grace, we must take it as a free gift. Moreover, as many of us as have received the grace of God, are more or less effectually taught the depravity of our nature and the pollution of our hearts and lives, so that we are compelled to see and feel the humiliating and distressing fact, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The great and distinguishing doctrine of the Gospel, therefore, that there is mercy for the chief of sinners, is an article of faith for the constant use of the best of Christians:

indeed the best of Christians are they who make the most use of it. Those are the best who strive the most to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and with pure hearts and blameless lives, to maintain holy communion with God, and to glorify him in all their ways. These are the persons who feel most deeply the depravity and ruin of their natures, and deplore most penitently the unfruitfulness and worthlessness of their lives. We find out the strength and depth of sin in us by undertaking to subdue it and root it out; and the harder and the longer we labor, of course the more we discover of the depths of the sin that dwelleth in us. Now, these are the persons who know how to estimate the necessity and preciousness of that freer and boundless grace of Christ, which seeks and saves that which is lost; and that Christ came to save the chief of sinners is the ground of their hope, and is more and more continually the only solid ground that they can find to rest upon. In the mean while the course of events comes in aid of their inward experience of the depravity of their nature. For, as we are in the way of finding out more and more the ruin of our nature by sin, we are also finding out by time and experience, the ruin of our condition in the world. Outward tribulation, and the decay of all things belonging to us here, and the steady approach of death, conspire with the experience going on within us, to show us that in ourselves we are but a mass of ruins. How glorious, now, to such as these is the person of Christ, who comes to us mighty to save! who comes with righteousness for our guilt, and life eternal for our dying life, that we may flee to him for refuge from guilt and destruction! So, the sun of righteousness rises on our darkness with healing in his wings! This light is the life of peace and hope in miserable man. By it he is invited to turn to God, and to hope in his mercy, which also would effectuate in him repentance and filial obedience, by which he overcomes the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. These are they who know the gift of God, and who ask of Christ living water, and who receive it at his hands.

But how many are they who despise all these things? And wherefore do they despise them? Because they trust in themselves, and hope for their portion in this world. They flatter themselves with long life; and hope for great things. They will not admit their guilt before God as sinners, neither do they fear the infliction of his wrath. Excited by vehement desire, and bewildered by their vain and senseless imaginations, they live in a world of their own, a fabric of dreams and visions. In the mean while, over and above the frightful catastrophes continually befalling them in this world, there remains the guilt of sin, and the punishment of it by the righteous law of God, and their continued exposure to its execution upon them by death, and the second

death following after—of all which they are regardless, and about which they will not be exhorted, and can not be alarmed. How dismal is this condition! how frightful their exposure! Is there one such here? Be warned—be entreated to pause! Your life flies like the passing wind: all you know or hope for here, is but momentary. You are not a mere animated creature, like beasts and birds, to live out your time here, and pass away into nothingness, and revive no more. You are an accountable, an immortal being, and an eternity of guilt and woe, or of holiness and bliss awaits you beyond the grave. Guilty and undone, the Gospel calls you, and however vile, however sinful, you are urged to come to Christ, and he will give you the water of life. That gift will abide with you: it is a good and a perfect gift: it comes from the Father of lights—the Father of spirits: it will be in you and with you, ever new, ever young, instinct with wisdom, love, joy, peace, hope; incorruptible, invisible, ascendant, transcendant, buoyant over guilt, fear, sorrow, danger, pain, death; springing up to everlasting life. Look unto Christ, the light of men, and see in him the life and hope of mortal, hopeless man. If he be not your hope, who is your hope? whom do you trust? where is your strength—your refuge? what is your righteousness with God? what your plea for pardon? what your claim for immortal life? Have you no sin to be forgiven; no sorrow to be assuaged; no fever to be allayed; no necessity to be supplied; no gifts to be conferred; no victory over temptation to be bestowed; no duties to be done; no friends to be benefited; no interest to be secured; no death to be conquered; no account to be rendered at the bar of God, and no soul to be saved from condemnation and despair; no place in heaven to be secured, and no immortal crown to be received? Or can you do all this for yourself alone?

But if there be here any one whose soul is smitten with the sense of sin, and who is ready to give up all as lost, let him open his ears and hear the gracious words of the Saviour of lost men, which are as pointed to you as if they but now were spoken to you out of heaven, as they were to the Samaritan woman. If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst ask of Christ, and he will give thee living water. Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.

Does one say, "Oh! that I were worthy! then, indeed, I would take thereof." But hear and understand the call: "Whosoever will." "Ah! I am not a true penitent." But you do not hear "Whosoever will." "Ah! I can not pray as I ought." Again the word of the Lord lifts up the cry: "Whosoever will." "Oh! I must be born again. I must have a new heart. I must be struck down under conviction. I must confess and forsake my sins. I must be melted in godly sorrow. I must"—Stop! stop! don't

you hear the word of the Lord? Will you drown his voice in your clamors? Hear, thou deaf one! "Whosoever WILL!" 'Tis not what you *were*; 'tis not what you *are*; 'tis not what you *will* be; but, "Whosoever will! Do you not understand? Can you not consider that all these gainsayings of yours proceed from your *not knowing* the GIFT of God? Now, away with all your objections, and listen: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Again, I hear you say: "Christ says in the text, I must ask. If He means *me*, I must first know the gift of God, and *then* I must ask. I fear I know not the gift of God, and how then can I ask?" True: so says the text. And without contradicting it, and by an expansion of the full proclamation of a finished salvation, the closing words of the last chapter of the last book of Scripture, as if it was the last Gospel trumpet—the loudest, sweetest, longest of all—repeating every note in the finale: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "After all, it does not mean *me*." The Syriac translation of the New Testament takes that objection away. Thus it reads: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come *thou*. And let him that heareth, say, Come *thou*. And let him who thirsteth come; and he that is inclined, let him take the water of life gratis.*"

Now, you say: "There is a difference between inclination and will. It seems to me that I am inclined, but how can I *will*?" Consider, will is inclination *indulged*. If inclined to take the water of life, indulge your inclination, and take it, and the deed is done, and you are saved! "But how can I will, since it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do?" In answer, I will ask you a question, and if you will answer it you will answer your own question, as well as mine. How can you live, since it is in God that you live? How can you move, since it is in God that you move? How can you exist, since it is in God that you have your being? Will you stop living, moving, existing, and wait until God works first, and then you act next? Will you stop breathing, and wait until God first works the act of breathing? You are inclined to rise and walk—you will to rise and walk—you rise and walk. Are you inclined to take the water of life?—will and take! "But I know not what is meant by taking the water of life." Taking the water of life means receiving Christ. He says: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" that is, drink him. He is bread; he is water. You reply: "That's a mystery; I know not its meaning." Well, then, the plain meaning is this: receiving and resting on Christ, and him crucified, as your ransom from bondage to the law as a covenant; from its

* Dr. Murdock's Trans. Syr. Test.

curse as a transgressor, and from the enslaving and condemning power of sin within you. His blood will justify you; his Spirit sanctify you, and his power will support, protect, and guide you to everlasting life. Now, receiving and resting on Christ in this way will renew and cheer your soul, as bread and water renews, sustains, and cheers your body.

"But if I venture on Christ thus, perhaps I shall fail. If I had the right to take him, then I might venture." Well, you have the right. Consider: the offer to give gives the right to take, else it's no offer. Christ is offered to you in the Gospel: "Preach the Gospel to *every* creature:" and you are one. Nay, more, you are commanded to believe on Christ. "This is his commandment," saith John, "that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." Is it not safe to obey God? to take what he offers to give? The whole Church says, Come and take! Do you not, besides all this, see that by thus refusing to accept of the gift of Christ, and of all grace and glory in him, you are committing sin? yes, the greatest of sins; that one sin—unbelief, binds you down to all the sin you have ever committed, and rivets upon you all the curses of the law, and shuts in your face the door of hope.

"But I do not yet repent." Repent first of the sin of unbelief; and that, by taking hold of Christ immediately. "But how do I know that this is the set time?" Behold! *now* is the accepted time. Behold! *now* is the day of salvation!

Are you willing? "But I know not whether I am elected. How can I believe in Christ if I am not elected?" If you are elected, and you knew it, you would have to believe in Christ. Believe, then, now, and you will be saved, whether you know of your election or not. Are you willing? or are you now rejecting the offers of Christ, and salvation through him? If so, your blood be on your own head! Hereafter say: "I was brought to the threshold of salvation; the door was open; every objection was removed; I heard, as it were, Christ and his Church calling me to enter in! I stood: I beheld: I wondered: I turned away! And ——!"

SERMON XXVIII.*

BY REV. E. P. RODGERS, D.D.

OF ALBANY.

THE GREAT QUESTION.

"FOR what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—MATTHEW 16: 26.

THIS is a great question. It was propounded by the greatest of all teachers. It has been before the world more than eighteen hundred years. But no mind has as yet fully mastered its intense significance, on this side of the grave. We may have correct views of its meaning and importance, but we can not have adequate views. We may be enabled by the Divine Spirit to understand enough of its weight to be stimulated to earnest effort for the salvation of our own souls, and the souls of others. But eternity alone can fully teach all that it implies. Yet this question lies at the basis of all Christian effort, whether individual or associated. No man can make any intelligent or well-directed effort after his own salvation, who has not considered with some degree of attention, whether the world or his soul is worth the most. No association of men can make any true efforts for the spiritual welfare of their fellow-men, who have not considered these comparative values. Other considerations may be allowed to present their claims, and exert their proper influence. But this is, and must be, fundamental. Just in proportion as we are taught how to estimate the value of the soul, shall we be stimulated in our efforts in its behalf. And whether we address, as we often do, an individual, and urge upon him the importance of seeking salvation, or whether we address, as we do at this time, an association of men, and endeavor to enforce on them the duty of laboring for the salvation of others, the most legitimate as well as the most hopeful method, is to impress on the individual or the association, the importance of the thing to be saved. And for the basis of any such effort, there can be no consideration so pertinent, none so irresistible, as the suggestion of the text: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

* Preached at the request of the City Missionary Society of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, in the church corner of Fifth avenue and Twenty-ninth st., Sabbath evening, May 2, 1858.

For it is evident that the very necessity of missionary efforts in this or any other city, lies in the fact that men every where are periling their souls forever, from an ignorance of their real value, and the fearfulness of their loss. There are scores of thousands of men in this vast metropolis, who bear within them souls of inestimable value, who, with an ignorance of their worth, as criminal as it is pitiable, are bartering them away for a poor share of this perishing world. Ay! there are men in all your churches too, who are doing the same foolish and wicked thing. With a folly worse than that of the son of the ancient patriarch, they are selling their magnificent birth-right to a glorious immortality, for a mess of pottage. All classes of men are making the worst bargains every day. The young man is buying pleasure; the young maiden is buying admiration; the man of business is buying wealth; the man of ambition is buying place; the man of study is buying learning; all at too great a price. Here and every where, in the palace, and in the hovel; under the shadow of the house of God, and in the dark haunts of vice; on these broad streets, and through the filthy alleys, men and women are buying the world and selling their souls. And there can be but one result of such bargains. It is eternal, hopeless ruin.

The great thing then to be done, by God's blessing, to stop this awful traffic, is to teach men what their souls are worth. Only thus can they be prevented from making the dreadful bargain which exchanges the immortal soul for a perishing world.

This is the great, the blessed work, which the Society, in whose behalf it is my privilege to address you, is trying to do. It aims to establish and sustain in this great city, those schools where men can be taught the value of the soul. This lesson can not be taught in ordinary schools. The true seminary for this teaching is the Christian Church. The great text-book is the Word of God. An association, therefore, whose great object it is to establish and sustain Christian churches, among the moral wastes of a great city, by whatever collateral and secondary considerations it may be properly influenced, must find its prime, its fundamental, its mighty argument, from what the word of God reveals of the worth of the soul.

I have, therefore, preferred to leave all other considerations, and endeavor to deepen, if possible, the convictions of my hearers on this fundamental point. The more we are impressed with the greatness of the soul and the littleness of the world, the more we shall be stimulated in our individual or our associated capacities, to increased effort to save our fellow-men from that disastrous bargain, which buys the one at the expense of the other.

Let us then take these two things which are compared and balanced in the proposition of the text, and coolly examine into their respective values. The world, the whole world: the soul,

the immortal soul. What are they worth, and what sort of a bargain will that be which exchanges the one for the other?

The world! It is a great, a beautiful, a magnificent thing. What stores of precious gifts it offers! There is the world of beauty, to delight the eye; the world of melody, to charm the ear; the world of knowledge, to enrich the mind; the world of love, to bless the heart. There is the world of wealth, to gratify luxury; the world of fame, to stimulate ambition; the world of power, to minister to pride; the world of pleasure, to entrance the senses. Surely, the craving heart of man can ask no more. Beauty, melody, knowledge, love, wealth, learning, fame, pleasure, all are here! And are they worth nothing? If a man should sell his soul for these, are they not worth the price? They might be but for the inexorable conditions annexed to the purchase. Man can buy the world. He can buy every one of those elements of happiness which she offers. He may be rich, and powerful, and wise, and beloved. He may have the world with all that she can give, but he must buy it on her terms. He must work, work hard, work long, work constantly. Gold does not rain down from heaven into a man's coffers. Learning, and fame, and power, are not picked up in the flowery path of indolence and ease. The path of the ambitious man is a rough and crooked one. And as he winds, and struggles, and climbs, Envy scowls at him, and Scorn points her finger, and Malice reviles him, and Hate denounces him, and all the black and bitter passions that fester in the heart, spit their venom at him. The lofty elevation which he reaches, is cold and bleak. Like the summit of a mountain, which from the vale below seems bathed in the softest sunlight, but which the climber finds chill and freezing as the grave; so the highest places among men are often cold, and uncongenial to the heart. And when man has toiled and struggled to gain the world, and has seemed to succeed, he finds that there are two things which, after all, it does not possess—the capacity to satisfy, and the power to endure. It can not meet man's wants, and it can not bless him always. It can not give health to the body. What is beauty to the eye which is obscured by cataract, or tortured by inflammation? What is music to the ear that is closed by deafness? What is luxury to the system acutely sensitive to disease and every nerve of which is an avenue of pain? What are power, and fame, and empire, to a poor miserable invalid, whose whole life is but a struggle to live, and who envies the sturdy beggar who asks for alms at his palace-gate? And what are all the gifts of this world to a man whose spirit is wounded by remorse, or harrowed up by dismal forebodings; or to him who mourns in bitterness of soul at the graves of those he loves? Gaining the world does not imply freedom from these evils. The world with all her lying promises, dares not engage to keep you in per-

petual health; to rid your mind of anxious care; or to keep sorrow and death from your door. If you buy the world, you must buy it subject to these deductions; and the margin is fearfully wide. It takes in sickness, and pain, and disappointment, and sorrow, and remorse. Men who have gained the world have found that their purchase was encumbered with all these, and have had awful doubts, even in the midst of wealth, and power, and fame, whether, after all, the purchase was worth the price. But if it were not so, if a man could have the whole world, with all its varied stores of enjoyment, and free from pain or disappointment, even then it would be worthless, because he could not keep it. His title, at the longest, is good but for three-score years and ten, and then he must give it up forever. To-day he may be worth a million, and own his broad acres. To-morrow, all that is left is the silver plate on his coffin, and six feet by two, of graveyard estate. How does the world look to a dying man? How does he estimate its worth? What does he think it profits a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What is that worth which is hard to get, which can not satisfy, which can not last, and must be relinquished forever almost as soon as it is gained? May there not be such a thing as paying too much for the world?

But there is the other term in this problem. The soul—is it worth more than the world? May it not be a wise purchase to exchange the one for the other? We must look at the value of both, before we can decide this question fairly.

The first great element of value in the soul, is its spiritual nature. Matter in its most refined combinations and beautiful forms, is matter still, and subject to the laws of corruption and decay. The flower that blooms so fair in the morning, is withered at night, and when faded and scentless, is carelessly flung away. The fair ones who bloom around our hearth-stones, and exhale sweet fragrance in our dwellings, often fade and wither like the flowers. All matter, even in its grandest and most majestic forms, is changeable, corruptible, and passing away. The very world itself is a dying world; and the day will come, when it will shudder and groan in the death-agony, nature be thrown into convulsions, the tall mountains be bowed in the throes of dissolution, the cold death-damps settle down upon the valleys, and the trumpet of the angel ring out the knell of time. But there is something within every man, which we can not see, nor hear, nor touch, which will outlive the magnificent catastrophe of a world's decease, and still live on untouched and unaffected by the mighty ruin. It is the soul, which is spiritual in its nature, not subject to material laws—can brave the ravages of time, and defy the arm of death. Is there any thing, then, in a material and perishable world, which can compare in value with a spiritual essence? As well might you com-

pare a painted bubble vanishing into air, with a gigantic orb, careering in majesty along the path of ages. Nay, even such analogy is imperfect. The bubble and the star are both material; they differ only in degree of duration. For not even the glorious constellations which gem the evening sky, can compare in their material glories with the spiritual grandeur of one infant soul. It has well been said by the eloquent orator of our country* in a matchless discourse on the uses of Astronomy: "The earth moves, and the planets move, and the great sweeping tides of air move, and the mighty waters move, and the empires of men move, and the world of thought moves, ever onward and upward, to higher facts and bolder theories." Ah! yes, physical forces move, and the spiritual forces move. But the former reach their limits in time. Before the latter, stretches the illimitable area of eternity.

Nothing can be in the highest sense valuable, which is not durable. It is the blot on all created things that they must change, and die. They can not transcend their own nature. Decay and death must work upon them their will. But to be above the power of decay, to be insensible to the influence of change, to defy even the inexorable hand of time, surely, this imparts a noble element of value. What, then, is the limit to the value of the soul? How can you adequately estimate its worth, which, ages after this creation has passed away, will have but entered on the infancy of a being which knows no age, and blushes with the rosy dawn of a morning to which gray evening never comes?

When we consider, therefore, the spiritual nature of the soul, is it not likely that its exchange for any material object will prove an unprofitable and disastrous bargain?

Next, consider the wonderful powers with which the soul is endowed, and you have another mighty element of its value. The power of thought, or reason, belongs to it, and this can not be predicated of matter. You may combine and arrange the particles of matter into striking and beautiful forms, but you can not inspire them with reason; you can not make them think, or feel, or act. The sculptor may chisel from the marble the image of your friend. It may be cut and polished into the most exquisite proportion and radiant beauty, but still it is a cold, dead, passionless thing. Speak to it; it answers not. Look upon it with an eye that beams with the fondest gaze of love; no responsive ray comes back from the marble pupil. Clasp it in a warm embrace, it is cold and rigid as death. Speak to it with all the fervor of loving eloquence; there is no flush of sympathetic fondness on that face, no concordant soul is working there, no emotion within heaves the breast, lights up the features, and sends the tide of feeling along the tingling nerves. It is a dead thing. It can feel nothing;

* Edward Everett.

it can think nothing; it can do nothing. So it is with all the forms of matter. They can not think, or reason, or feel. But who can measure, or describe, the powers and capacities of the soul? What words are mighty enough to tell what heights the soaring mind can reach, and what depths of feeling lie within the heart? The mind can travel on untiring wing through the vast realm of creation. It can ransack the crowded storehouses of this earth, and force nature to disclose her secrets, and give up her treasures. It can bend the elements to its control. It can oblige the air, the water, the fire, to do its bidding. It harnesses airy vapor in bands of steel, and drives it with thundering speed over the iron way. It makes the sun its artist, and bids it burn in upon the polished plate the features of a friend. It brings even the forked lightning from the clouds, and sends it obedient on its errands. It sweeps the very outskirts of interminable space, communes with suns and systems, learns their size, measures their orbits, and reckons their distances. The mountain is rooted to its place. The sun is confined to his course. The ocean must ebb and flow within its appointed bounds. But who can fix a limit to the range of the soul? Who but the Infinite shall say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther"?

And then, how wonderfully acute and deep are the sensibilities of the soul! Numerous, delicate, and varied, as are the nerves of sensation which are stretched through the body, how unworthy are they to be compared with that harp of a thousand strings which vibrates within the soul! Every spirit, whether of joy or woe, of hope or fear, of love or hate, of desire or disappointment, of rapture or despair, sweeps those chords and brings forth responsive murmurs. What an ocean of feeling lies within every human heart, now slumbering in repose, now gently stirred with emotion, now swept into fury by the blasts of passion, now hushed to rest by the breath of love. What large capacities for action or for endurance, does the soul possess! It is capable of bliss that exceeds the raptures of angels, of misery that surpasses the torments of fiends. The elements of heaven or hell lie cradled in the bosom, ready at the command of God to start up into intense and unalterable play, deciding at once and forever, the character and the destiny of man. We sometimes catch glimpses of the depths of the soul, and we shudder as if we were looking into the bowels of a volcano. Its powers are fearfully great. Its sensibilities are awfully acute. Its capacities are appallingly profound. There is nothing in the universe like the human spirit, save Him who made it. Next to the infinite God, the grandest thing of all is the human soul.

Then add to your estimate of the value of the soul, another great item, its immortality, and tell us what is the sum of its worth. Stamp this precious coin with the stamp of eternal currency; fast-

en this splendid jewel in the setting of immortality, and what will it then be worth? Let this spiritual nature, these grand powers, these magnificent capacities, these acute sensibilities, all be everlasting, and can the worth of the soul be fully computed? A thing without an end; a grand thing without an end; a very precious thing without an end! The very idea overcomes the imagination. To break down the rock of Gibraltar, fragment by fragment, with a hammer, to empty the ocean with a cup, to carry the entire globe, grain by grain, one grain in ten thousand years—all these gigantic undertakings would have an end. But when they were all accomplished, the soul of man would still have but just begun its existence. Where, then, is the arithmetic which can calculate its value?

Add but one more item to this account—the price of the soul's redemption. Said an ancient preacher: "The worth of the soul! who can estimate it? Angels! ye know it not—ye never fell. Devils! ye know it not! your sufferings are never at an end! Son of God! thou knowest it! for thou didst pay the price of its redemption!"

Now this great, spiritual, immortal, blood-bought soul, is the thing which is proposed as the price of the world. And millions of men, who call themselves thrifty and sagacious men, are making this very bargain. For that small portion of wealth, or fame, or pleasure, which they can gain in this short life, they are exchanging the hopes and joys of a glorious immortality. But if they could make a better bargain; if they could buy the world, with all its joys, without one drawback or deduction, without one moment of pain, disappointment, or sorrow; if their fondest wishes could all be realized; even then, to buy the world at the cost of the soul, would be a most disastrous bargain. Let us imagine such a case. It is permitted to a man to buy the world on these terms. He is to have it all; all the money, the power, the wisdom, the friends, which the world can furnish. He is to have unbroken health, and unalloyed enjoyment. He is never to lose property, friends, or pleasure. And he is to have all this for a thousand years. Perpetual youth and unchanging vigor are his. The revelries of to-day bring no weariness or pain to-morrow. His years roll smoothly on in one unbroken round of joy. He is the idol of his friends, the admiration of his country, the envy of the world. Now nine hundred and ninety-nine years have passed away. What a glorious time he has had! Mighty changes have swept over the face of nature; great revolutions have blotted out kingdoms, but no change has affected his fortunes. For nearly a thousand years he has been at the zenith of prosperity and fame. And now the last year of his lease of the world is drawing to its close. Its last month has come: its last week. But there is no change yet. The sun rises and sets upon the world still in his

possession, and still wearing a smiling face. The last day of the thousand years arrives. Its sun is as bright in the morning, and as glorious at its meridian as ever. But it begins to go down in clouds; there is a black pall creeping up over the sky; there are strange mutterings under the distant horizon; thicker and thicker grows the gloom; the sun sinks behind the west; a fearful thunder-clap shakes the world, and its owner is gone! gone! gone! Does he not lie there upon the splendid couch? His body does, but it is pale, and stiff, and lifeless. The heart that beat so high with health and happiness for a thousand years, is still. The eye that sparkled for ten centuries with undimmed brightness, is shut. But the man—the soul, where is it? Gone! gone to pay for the world, which was his for a thousand years. Uncover the bottomless pit; look down into that world of darkness and woe; that place of sad remembrance, and bitter remorse; that place where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched forever; there is the man paying for the gain of the world, by the loss of the soul. Let ten thousand ages pass away. Look again—there he is still—the purchase still unpaid; the account still uncanceled. That thousand years of wealth and pleasure; where and what are they now? Let ten millions of ages pass away—there is the man in his living misery, in his eternal remorse. The mighty price is still unpaid, the fearful debt is still unsettled. Tell us now, ye men who buy and sell, and know all about questions of profit and loss: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

But why talk of a thousand years? Let the term be extended, and will the purchase be a wise one then? Let a man buy the world, and be insured in its possession to the very end of time. He shall not be called to pay for it as long as the world itself endures. But then, when the trumpet of the archangel is heard proclaiming that time shall be no more; when the earth is quaking in the throes of dissolution, when the heavens are rolled together like a scroll, when the blaze of the final conflagration lights up with its lurid glare the bodies of the myriad dead as they rise from their graves, and ascend to the judgment; then before an assembled universe—before the great white throne, with heaven beaming above, and hell gaping below, let the man pay the tremendous price at which he bought the world. Will it then be a profitable bargain? Oh! no, it will prove ruinous. It will strip the man of every thing; reduce him to eternal bankruptcy; shut him up forever in the prison of the spiritual debtor, and write on his dungeon walls in characters of fire that shall burn in their awful import on his heart, as he gazes at them forever: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Just such bargains as this, thousands of men in this city are

making every day. They are buying the world. They are selling their souls. They are not aware of the ruinous nature of the bargain they are making. They need instruction. They need schools in which this great problem in spiritual arithmetic may be solved. But they are making these bargains; and are rushing onward to an eternal bankruptcy. I can see the history of such a man pass before me as in a vision. Let us look at it as it passes.

I see an ardent, ingenuous youth, the pride of his father, the idol of his mother, going forth from the paternal roof to embark in the business of life. With all the enthusiasm of youth, he plunges into the rapid and turbid current. Industrious, enterprising, persevering, men mark him as one born to command success. They predict for him a triumph on the arena of trade. His mind is absorbed with the idea of being a great merchant, a distinguished financier, a man of wealth and power in the community. Thoughts of his soul, of sin, of repentance, of the judgment, will now and then force themselves into his mind. He can not quite forget his father's counsels, and his mother's prayers. His conscience and the word of God both admonish him to seek the salvation of his soul. But he says: "I must attend to business now; my position is to be gained; I must devote all my time and energies to that end. I can not afford the time to think of these things now. When I have become firmly established, and have reached a certain point in my course, then, in the maturity of my powers and profits, I can attend to these duties." And so life's young morning slips away; so the dew of youth is exhaled; so the time when the heart is tender, and the conscience active, and the will flexible, and the whole spiritual man more susceptible of impressions for good, is gone, gone forever!

I see now a man of middle age. He stands high among the merchant princes of the day. His success has been marvelous. I look upon his face. The bright, ingenuous expression of his youth has fled. Care, thought, and anxiety, have left deep marks upon his brow. His business has been greatly extended. His ships go to every clime. His correspondence reaches to every land. His operations are on a gigantic scale. He is looked up to as a leader in great enterprises. Weighty public cares are thrown upon him. Immense responsibilities surround him. His head, and heart, and hands, are crowded with business. Never in his early days, was he so engrossed with multifarious duties and engagements. What time has he now for thought and care for his spiritual interests? How can he at the same time attend to the world and the soul? How can he serve God and Mammon? Still he puts it off to the future. In a few years he will retire from these pressing cares, and be relieved from these gigantic responsibilities. Then, in the calm evening of life, will he seek to make his preparation for another world. And so strong man-

hood slips away; so the season of vigor and ripeness; the season when the judgment is most cool, and the reasoning powers most vigorous; the season when man may accomplish most for God's cause in the world, passes away, and life's great work is not begun.

I see now, an old man of three-score years and ten. Can this be the bright youth, the strong man, on whom we just now looked? His ardor and strength are gone. The infirmities of age are pressing heavily upon him. His mind is losing its tone and vigor. His faculties are blunted. His frame stoops and totters. The grasshopper is a burden, and they that look out at the windows are darkened. He is encumbered with the cares of a large estate. His investments, his houses, his lands, his ships, his securities, must all be looked after. The posthumous disposition of his estate, is a source of anxiety and trouble. His habits are fixed with the rigidity of years. How can he now break the bonds which they have woven round him? His conscience, subjected to a searing process for seventy years, is dull and almost lifeless. How can it rouse up, and undo the work of a lifetime in an hour? Death and eternity are not felt to be nearer now, than they were fifty years ago. He has so steadily accustomed himself to putting them away into the future, that they seem far off still, though he stands trembling on the borders of the grave. How can he then shake off the grasp of the world, and grapple with these tremendous realities? Alas! that man has spent his whole life in buying the world. He has purchased a large share of it; but how much it has cost him! The dew of his youth, the vigor of his manhood, the prime and strength of his entire being, have all been exhausted. And now, tottering on the very border-line of time, the world for which he has paid so much, is slipping from his nerveless grasp.

I look once more. Within that darkened chamber, surrounded by weeping friends, struggling in the gripe of that relentless foe, before whom we all must bow, lies that thrifty, sagacious, successful man. He is dying! Dying! Must a rich man die? Must a distinguished merchant, an eminent banker, die? Must the man whose energy, and wisdom, and success, have been the admiration and envy of the land: must such a man die? Oh! bring into that gloomy chamber all the trophies of life's triumph. Pile up around him all his varied forms of wealth. Bring in the massive ledgers which record his gigantic operations, and his splendid profits. How much wealth is there? There are millions of his gains. Has he not lived to some purpose? May not a man, after such success, be well content to die? Ask him that question, and mark the expression of that face, as the dark shadows of eternity are gathering around its wasted and distorted features. Doubt, disappointment, fear, remorse, despair, are painted there. Bend

your ear, and catch the feeble utterances that come from those quivering lips: "Oh! I am a dying man! I am going into eternity! and I die a poor man at last! I am going to meet a holy God, and I am full of sin! I am going to a spiritual world, and all my tastes and habits are sensuous and earthly! Oh! what a wreck I have made of life! I have sought the world; I thought I had gained it; but I must give it all up, now. And oh! fearful, maddening thought—I have lost my own soul!"

Oh! tell me now, my friends! Answer me the question; solve for me the mighty problem: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It is to teach men the value of their souls, and to save them from such ruinous bargains, that we need churches, and ministers, and Sabbath-schools, and all the means and agencies of a pure Christianity. The very basis of this mighty necessity is found in the significant question of my text. I need not travel out of this record, for the weightiest and most controlling arguments and appeals in behalf of that Society in whose behalf I speak. They are trying to save immortal souls. They are trying to do this in the right way. They are establishing seminaries, where the voice of Him who spake as never man spake, may be heard, teaching men the mighty lesson of the value of the soul. Why should we seek for any other basis of our appeal in their behalf? Why should we speak of those collateral and incidental results of these missionary labors, which uniformly attend the faithful effort to teach men what their souls are worth? Of course, such labors tend to lessen poverty, and crime, and disease; of course, they lighten taxation, encourage industry, add to the wealth, and character, and power of this great metropolis. But all this follows in the train of the salvation of the soul. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, for it hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Make men godly, and you put into their hands all the elements of virtue, prosperity, and success. Fountains, such as this Society aims to construct, are those whose streams make glad the city of our God! Great, noble, blessed is that city, where "God is known in her palaces for a refuge!" Stay the fearful traffic which is going on all through this city in human souls. Teach men what they are truly worth, and what a monstrous bargain it is to sell one soul for the whole world: lead them to study that lesson in Bethlehem, and Gethsemane, and Calvary, written in the tears and blood of the Son of God, and you will do a work for this great city, and for this glorious land, which will outlast all the enterprises of commerce, all the monuments of art, all the appliances of temporal greatness. And when you ask your fellow-men to aid you in this blessed work, which would add lustre to an angel's coronet; and selfishness, and avarice, and worldliness, and a dead formalism ask you, "To

what purpose is this waste?" you need no other reply, no other rebuke, no other argument, no other appeal, than the great question of the Great Teacher:

"FOR WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"

SERMON XXIX.

THE PATH OF THE JUST.

"THE path of the just is as the shining light."—PROV. 4: 18.

LET us consider:

I. The believer's natural state of darkness and misery. The light that is in him is darkness. His wisdom is folly. He labors, strives, and wearies himself for very vanity. But hark! a sovereign voice calls to him: "O sinner! thou hast sold thyself for naught, and thou shalt be redeemed without money." "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help."

II. The brilliant course he pursues after being turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God: his way is "as the shining light," or as the sun.

1. Beautiful in its appearance. The sun is as glorious an object as any in the whole creation. At its approach it tinges the distant clouds with light, and throws upon them unspeakable and varied beauties. On its first appearance it gilds the mountain's top and the tops of waving trees. After a short conflict it dispels all the shades of night, it illuminates the whole horizon. How delightful is this to every beholder! Thus the path of the righteous is exceedingly beautiful. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Their path at the very outset is beautiful to behold. The light of grace begins to adorn their actions. Their simplicity of mind and teachableness of spirit endear them to all their brethren; their lowliness and humility attract universal notice, while the fervor of their love excites admiration and esteem. The very shades in their character serve as a contrast to the excellency of the change that has passed upon them. As they proceed, their graces are more matured, and even thus early they "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour."

2. They shall continue to be beneficial in their influence. They have a work to do; and God will secure them in a course of well-

doing, or the divine purpose would fail. In this well-doing they shall even "wax stronger and stronger." The sun in our heavens does not rise to mock expectation, but to shine with productive splendor; the light which this luminary spreads over the earth enables the several orders of men to resume their respective callings. "In the darkness they could not go without stumbling," but now they follow their occupations without fear or difficulty. The prowling children of iniquity hide themselves till the return of night. What amazing varieties of employment now recommence, suited to the various talents of mankind! What purposes are pursued by the great and the elevated among mankind! By one day's sun a kingdom may be obtained, as in Joshua's day.

Again, does not the natural sun rise to fructify the earth, to make it feel his genial influence? Yes, "first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear." No sun, no ripeness; but every part of the earth feels the sun's invigorating beams, either for utility or beauty, for the growth of the finest of the wheat or to beautify the flowers of the field, to cause the little hills to rejoice on every side; and without this the husbandman would sow in vain, in vain the showers would descend upon hill and vale; without it no hopes could be entertained for the food or the pleasures of human life. And does not the sun say to the inhabitants of the universe, "Work while it is day," for night will soon return? Nor is the Christian unprofitable in his ascension; his light shines before men for beneficial purposes. The light of nature is, like that of the moon and stars, highly beneficial to mankind; but, when "the light of the glorious Gospel" shines into the believer's heart, it breaks forth in radiance over his life and actions, which no human power can extinguish, but which will continue to flame even in persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. And while the sons of wickedness are a snare and a stumbling-block to each other, to the ignorant, and to the unwary, the believer throws a light around him. "He shines in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," by which entangled souls may see their situation and way of escape. His personal fruitfulness is comely, his benevolence unfeigned, his friendship sincere, his conduct just, his zeal steady, his candor exemplary. Morals can not be a dead letter or a mere name while he lives to exemplify them. He excites holy impressions in others, or cherishes such as are weak. He aids the beginnings of grace, and contributes to the general good.

3. Believers, like the sun, are constant in their progress. The sun invariably pursues his wonted course. From the instant that he rises he hastens towards the meridian. He receives his power of ascension from God. His movements are such that we are assured of the very moment of his perfect elevation. The believer's progress is directed by the same power: the self-confident mortal

may "faint and be weary," and some may utterly fail; "but those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," till they are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The sun's splendor may indeed be intercepted by the clouds that intervene, and some of these are very dense and black; yet his real existence is not doubted; his light penetrates the thick darkness, so that the character of day is yet preserved, and, though unseen, yet his course suffers no interruption. Sad, indeed, are the clouds that at times overspread the believer, as it were "thick clouds of the sky." To himself he seems to stop in his course, and his progress is often doubtful to others. Here is one of the mysteries of grace. But consider,

III. The glorious consummation of the text, beyond what can be seen in this world. The believer's individual glory, and the glory of the whole church, can not be perfect here. The full blaze of eternal day can alone bear the testimony. The natural sun shall cease to be a just image of the saints. Creation will not furnish a likeness sufficiently glorious. Then will the saints arise in the likeness of Jesus, in some resemblance to him who is now the great head of all things, and "the light of the world." They shall then, in the kingdom of God, be clothed with his righteousness; then shall they be "the just" in the strictest and purest sense of the term; their imperfections shall disappear forever. Many of the saints have shone brightly on earth; but their best light, though it were equal to that of the Apostle of the Gentiles, shall be nothing in comparison with that which shall hereafter be manifested. "Then shall they know even as they are known." Nay, their light of intelligence shall be ever growing, as millions of years shall roll on their way; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," what great things are laid up for "those who love God and are the called according to his purpose." But, as we are even now the "children of the light," let us study to act a part becoming our high calling; let us impart to a dark world that which we have received; and, being faithful unto death, we shall receive a crown of glory, which shall never fade away. Oh! how great is the privilege to be permitted to shed any degree of light, effulgence, and lustre, upon our dark world! that God has favored us with faculties, powers, and a willingness of mind to exert ourselves in the great work of salvation!